

## **H9 – CORE ELEMENTS PRESERVATION OF THE WAN CHAI MARKET**

### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To inform Members of URA's proposed core elements preservation of the Wan Chai Market.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The preservation of the Wan Chai Market building has been discussed several times by the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) since 1990. The Market building was accorded a Grade III Historical Building status by the AAB in 1990. In 1991, members agreed that the market was not of great historical value and that efforts should be made to salvage useful material and fabric of the building before demolition. In response to some public concerns on the preservation of the Market in 2000, the AAB agreed that efforts should be made to preserve the façade, if whole preservation was not possible. In March 2004, the issue was brought up again in the AAB who subsequently sent a letter to the developer asking them to consider the market preservation proposals submitted by the Hong Kong Institute of Architects.
- 2.2 The Market building is located in Wan Chai and was part of a redevelopment scheme (H9) undertaken by the now-defunct Land Development Corporation (LDC). The implementation of the scheme was taken over by the successor to the LDC, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) in 2001. The scheme comprises 3 separate redevelopment sites, namely Sites A, B and C as shown in the attached **Appendix I**.
- 2.3 The H9 redevelopment scheme initiated by the LDC in 1995 was approved by the then Governor-in-Council in September 1996, with the intention that the Market be demolished and the site redeveloped.
- 2.4 In 1996, a joint venture development agreement was entered into by the LDC with the developer, Messrs. Dollars Union Limited (a subsidiary of Chinese Estates Holdings Limited, hereinafter referred as "the Developer") for implementation under a single Land Grant covering Sites A, B and C.
- 2.5 Site C was originally approved to be redeveloped as an office tower by the Town Planning Board in 1999. Subsequently, in September 2004, an amended Master Layout Plan was approved to provide instead for a residential tower. Land premium has been paid to the Government as a result of the change in land use.
- 2.6 The redevelopment of Site A and Site B has now been completed, with the residential units being sold to private purchasers. The new market constructed at Site A has also been handed over to the Food and Environmental Hygiene

Department in early 2007 for the relocation of on-street hawkers at Tai Yuen Street (South) and Cross Street (East) and hawkers in the existing Market.

- 2.7 Following the Chief Executive's 2007-08 Policy Address, the on-street hawkers at Tai Yuen Street (South) and Cross Street (East) will now be retained. Under the revised plan as agreed as a result, there will be no thoroughfare on Tai Yuen Street (South) and Cross Street (East). Hence, the traffic flow passing through Tai Yuen Street, Cross Street into Wan Chai Road and Queen's Road East will be greatly reduced.

### **3. CURRENT POSITION**

- 3.1 In response to the increasing public demand over preservation of heritage and historic buildings, particularly in light of a new heritage conservation policy announced by the Administration in October 2007, URA has reviewed some preservation options together with the Developer for the Market building within the following framework:-

- a) the legal power and duty and contractual obligations of all parties concerned;
- b) the technical and structural feasibility of any suggested alternatives;
- c) the financial implications and cost-benefits for all parties concerned; and
- d) the URA's obligations to exercise due care and diligence in handling its finances under the URA Ordinance and the Urban Renewal Strategy.

- 3.2 With the Developer's agreement in-principle, a core elements preservation scheme has been developed with the residential tower being constructed over the existing Market. The major façade, including the main entrance, the curved canopy and fins, and part of the front portion of the structural form will be preserved (**Appendix II** refers). The preserved portions of the Market building will be mainly used for commercial purposes as in the approved scheme.

- 3.3 The originally proposed setting back of Site C for road widening purposes at the junction of Wan Chai Road and Queen's Road East is no longer required due to the reduction of traffic flow as a result of retaining on-street hawkers at Tai Yuen Street (South) and Cross Street (East).

### **4. the Core ELEMENTS Preservation Scheme**

- 4.1 The architectural style of Wan Chai Market is 'Streamline Moderne', a style emerged in the late Art Deco period. The major character defining elements of this period are the curvilinear façade treatment with deep canopies and plain external wall finishes. The Style reflects a radical change in the approach to architectural design in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The conservation approach to this redevelopment project can be described as "core elements preservation" – i.e. to preserve key elements of the market building in-situ, including the façade and its

supporting structural frame behind. The development of Western Community Centre integrated with the Former Old Mental Hospital façade in High Street, Sai Ying Pun and the addition of the new block at the rear of the Peninsula Hotel, Tsimshatsui are local examples of this mode of conservation. There are also other successful overseas examples of such a conservation approach, for example, Hearst Tower in New York, Potico Scots Church Redevelopment in Sydney, Banco Nacional Ultramarino in Macau, 1 Sansome Street and 456 Montgomery Street in San Francisco, which are all developments above the conserved portions of historical buildings. The proposed conservation approach for Wan Chai Market building does not contravene the principles of major charters under the International Council on Monuments and Sites such as the Burra Charter and the Venice Charter.

- 4.2 The design of the new residential tower on top of the Market building will take into account the original architectural style of the Market. Some of the design features that will be seen and expressed in the overall architectural composition of the new building are as follows:-
- Formal symmetry in building configuration
  - Smooth façade surface with little ornamentation
  - Sturdy-looking round corners
  - Emphasis on horizontal compositions
  - A simple white and pale-grey colour palette to mimic the Streamline Moderne/ International Style prevailing at the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century
  - Deep and yet thin-looking overhangs or eyebrow ledges over window openings.
- 4.3 As a significant portion of the main structural form will be retained, it is anticipated that it will now be more viable to preserve the major character-defining elements of the Market building (i.e. the façade and canopy), subject to detailed structural investigation.
- 4.4 As the proposed core elements preservation scheme has successfully upheld the contractual obligations of the concerned parties and has achieved a fine balance between heritage conservation and development, we believe it represents a win-win situation. It is a good example of blending the new with the old while giving due regard to the historic and architectural value of the Market building. The partially preserved Market building will contribute to the ‘cluster’ effect of historic buildings within the Old Wan Chai area and will play an important part in the Government’s and URA’s holistic approach to revitalize and develop the old Wan Chai area.

## **5. WAY FORWARD**

- 5.1 The MLP amendments have addressed the following:
- The proposed core elements preservation scheme of the Market building is a response to meeting public aspirations for conservation. It is also in line

with Chief Executive's 2007 – 08 Policy Address pledge to press ahead with the work on heritage conservation.

- The proposed scheme presents an innovative approach to balance development rights, contractual obligations, community aspirations, heritage conservation, technical feasibility and other considerations whereby the main façade and structure fronting Wan Chai Road and Queen's Road East will be preserved along with the character defining elements.
- To provide a better visual integration/relationship between the Market and the proposed residential tower, in terms of architectural language and features to postulate a coherent overall design.
- In view of the preservation of the on-street hawkers along Tai Yuen Street (South) and Cross Street (East), vehicles from the developments in Sites A and B will seldom go through Wan Chai Road and hence there is no need for its widening. This provides the opportunity to preserve the main façade of the Market, as the proposed widening of Wan Chai Road in the previously MLP is no longer necessary.
- Due to the need to keep the existing building envelope of the Market building, a smaller number of car parking spaces is proposed.

5.2 Subject to the comments received, URA will submit a revised MLP (**Appendix I**) to the Town Planning Board for approval. Public comments will be invited in the course of processing the submission under the Town Planning Ordinance.

Development Bureau/Urban Renewal Authority  
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